

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8625

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SUBJ: TRIBAL DISTURBANCES IN NWFP

REFS: A. LONDON 1065

B. KABUL 461

C. ISLAMABAD 756

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: AS REPORTED REF C. EMBASSY AND AMCONSUL PESHAWAR FIND NO SUBSTANCE IN LONDON PRESS ACCOUNTS OF ATTACKS BY AFGHAN TRIBESMEN ON PAKISTANI FRONTIER POSTS. WE CONCLUDE THAT STORIES GREW OUT OF SERIES OF INCIDENTS IN TIRAH AREA OF NWFP BETWEEN PAKISTANI AFRIDI TRIBESMEN AND PAK GOVERNMENT FORCES PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF OPPOSITION TO GOP ROAD BUILDING EFFORT. ROAD WAS BEGUN LAST YEAR IN ARE OF FRONTIER HITHERTO CONSIDERED INVIOLEATE. INITIALLY AGREED TO BY SOME AFRIDI LEADERS, THE ROAD WAS LATER OPPOSED BY MAJORITY AND CONSTRUCTION STOPPED LAST SUMMER. NOT MORE THAN ONE OR TWO KILLED IN CLASHES. MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY ASPECT OF TRIBAL CLASHES RELATES TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FACT THAT AFGHANS HAVE AT LEAST SOME INFLUENCE WITH

AFRIDIS AND HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN STRENGTHENING TRIBALS, RESOLVE TO OPPOSE ROAD. BUILT FOR DEFENSE AND NATION-BUILDING PURPOSES, ITS CONSTRUCTION OBVIOUSLY NOT TO GOA'S INTEREST. END/ INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

2. BACKGROUND: EFFORTS BY GOP TO PUSH AHEAD WITH ITS PROPOSED ROAD THROUGH TIRAH REGION OF KHYBER AGENCY WERE FRUSTRATED LAST SUMMER BY THE COMBINED POWER OF THE EIGHT AFRIDI SUB-TRIBES. ORIGINALLY, GOP HAD OBTAINED AGREEMENT FOR ROAD FROM CROSS SECTION OF LEADING TRIBAL MALIKS (LEADERS). HOWEVER, MANY OTHER LEADING TRIBESMEN OPPOSED ROAD (AND INDEED MANY OF SAME MALIKS WHO SAID THEY FAVORED ROAD WERE SECRETLY WORKING AGAINST IT). A JOINT JIRGA (COUNCIL) OR REPRESENTATION OF EIGHT SUB-TRIBES AGREED TO RAISE LASHKAR (WAR PARTY) TO CREATE TROUBLE FOR GOVERNMENT IN BUILDING ROAD AND HARASS THOSE MALIKS WHOI STILL FAVORED IT . A FEW OF PRO-ROAD MALIKS HAD THEIR HOUSES BURNED DOWN AND OTHERS WERE FORCED TO PAY FINES. AS RESULT OF LASHKAR'S ACTIVITIES (AND DECISION REACHED BY JIRGA), GOVERNMENT GAVE UP ALL ATTEMPTS TO BUILD ROAD. BUT BEFORE GOVERNMENT CEASED WORKING ON ROAD, IT WAS EXTENDED FEW MILES BEYOND FT. SOLOP. END OF ROAD NOW ABOUT 20 MILES FROM PESHAWAR.

3. RECENT TROUBLES: LAST WEEK, ASKAR ALI SHAH, KHYBER MAIL EDITOR, TOLD AMCONSUL PESHAWAR EVERTS THAT AFRIDIS WERE CONFRONTING GOVERNMENT TROOPS (KHYBER RIFLES - A SCOUT FORCE) AT TWO PLACES: (1) NEAR WHERE ROAD ENDED IN HILLS, AND (2) ON KAJURI PLAIN FEW MILES BEYOND BARA BAZAAR. HE SAID THAT GOVERNMENT HAD GIVEN ROAD GUARDS (KHASADARS) RADIO TO PERMIT THEM TO COMMUNICATE WITH OTHER TROOPS IN CASE OF TROUBLE. JANUARY 25, OMAR AFRIDI, NWFP HOME SECRETARY IN CONVERSATION WITH EVERTS, CONFIRMED FOREGOING AND BROUGHT STORY UP TO DATE. HE SAID THAT IN EARLY JANUARY AFRIDI TRIBESMEN ATTACKED THE KHASADAR OUTPOST, FORCING KHASADARS TO WITHDRAW, AND STOLE RADIO. GOVERNMENT THEN BROUGHT UP MORE TROOPS AND ISSUED ULTIMATUM TO TRIBEMEN WHO SOON AGREED TO RETURN RADIO AND PROMISED TO BEHAVE. KHASADARS MOVED

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BACK INTO OUTPOST WITH WIRELESS SET. WHILE NEGOTIATIONS WERE GOING ON, GOVERNMENT (TO SHOW THAT IS MEANT BUSINESS), BEGAN AGAIN TO WORK ON ROAD. DURING PERIOD OF ULTIMATUM AND NEGOTIATIONS, GOVERNMENT SUCCEEDED IN EXTENDING ROAD ANOTHER MILE. NOW SITUATION IS BACK TO SQUARE ONE WITH GOVERNMENT TACITLY CONCEDED IT WILL NOT CARRY OUT ANY MORE WORK ON ROAD. ONLY ONE OR TWO PERSONS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN KILLED IN INCIDENTS.

4. ACCORDING TO ASKAR ALI SHAH, DURING TIME OF CONFRONTATION ON ROAD, AFRIDIS WERE ALSO CREATING TROUBLE ON KAJURI PLAIN NEAR BARA BAZAAR (WHICH IS WINTER HEADQUARTERS OF MOST AFRIDIS - MANY OF WHO ARE NOMADIC). HOME SECRETARY CONFIRMED SHAH'S ACCOUNT OF MORE BRIEF CLASHES BETWEEN TRIBESMEN AND GOVERNMENT TROOPS (FRONTIER CONSTABLES AND KHYBER RIFLES) ON KAJURI PLAIN. IT APPEARS THAT ON ONE OCCASION TEAR GAS WAS USED BY TROOPS AGAINST AFRIDIS, BUT NO CASUALTIES WERE INFLICTED.

5. POL COUNSELOR DISCUSSED LONDON PRESS ACCOUNTS JANUARY 25 WITH MFA DIRGEN (AFGHANISTAN) MANSUR AHMED. AHMED IMMEDIATELY DISMISSED THEM AS GREATLY DISTORTED BY NO DOUBT RELATED TO PAKISTANI TRIBAL CLASHES OVER ROAD IN TIRAH, ESSENTIALLY THE EXPLANATION REPORTED ABOVE.

6. AS WE SEE IT, MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY ASPECT OF TRIBAL CLASHES RELATES TO FACT THAT AFGHANS HAVE AT LEAST SOME INFLUENCE WITH AFRIDIS AND HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN STRENGTHENING TRIBALS' RESOLVE TO OPPOSE ROAD. BUILT FOR DEFENSE AND NATION-BUILDING PURPOSES, ITS CONSTRUCTION OBVIOUSLY NOT TO GOA'S INTEREST.
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